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SCAN TO SHOP

Editor's Note

As a queer and mixed Hispanic individual, I have found within my 21 years of life that my skin color was a more defining factor than my sexuality and sexual orientation.

From a young age, my skin color determined how those around me, from familiar faces to strangers, treated me behind my back and to my face. I realized we are taught to distance ourselves from other skin colors within our communities. While at the same time, it is engraved in our brains that being white is desirable and beneficial - while other skin colors are not and at a disadvantage.

Through conversations with fellow BIPOC peers, I have learned the struggles and obstacles we have faced throughout our lives can mainly be attributed to our skin color and can not be fully understood by reading a short blog or scrolling through social media posts.

After talking to the rest of the editorial team at *Central Michigan Life*, I proposed the February print edition to focus on the impact of one's skin color while incorporating a year-long passion project, "How Color Paints Our World."

This was not an easy decision, nor one that we did in haste. Rather, it took months of outreach and research within the Mount Pleasant community.

Our world is everchanging; the United States has been referred to as a melting pot of diverse individuals from all regions across the world, their cultures and values forever intertwining into what the United States defines as 'American.'

The black and white portraits you will find in this edition are not directly tied to the stories but have been placed throughout this print as an essential element to understanding the impact skin color has, as these are our stories, this is our life, and this is our reality.

- Nico Mendoza, Visual Editor

> "You make someone not feel like a human being, not feel like a fellow peer, because you're just looking at them based on their skin color."
>
> CMU student
> Nico Mendoza

'We'll always be asking for forgiveness'

Central Michigan University and local historians explain the history of Mount Pleasant

By Lauren Rice & Bar Belian
News editor & staff reporter

It is possible to say that the Mount Pleasant area began with the acquisition of a large plot of land by a man named David Ward. But that's not the full story.

"This town was founded on corruption,"Cynthia Kilmer local historian, former mayor and city commissioner said. "It's better now, but that's how it started."

Kilmer was mayor of Mount Pleasant for a year in 2006, and spent nine years as a city commissioner. Now retired from a legal practice, she's working on a book to chronicle the history of Isabella County.

The simple facts are that Mount Pleasant was established in 1831, according to the city of Mount Pleasant website, but there's a longer history of mistreatment.

Starting with a turn for the worse

Antoine Cadillac landed in Detroit in 1701 but most settlements were coastal.

"You have a fort in Detroit, you have a fort in Mackinac, you have Sault Ste. Marie," Clarke Historical Librarian Bryan Whitledge said. "You don't have a lot of settlements inland, like Isabella County."

"The community was built on the backs of lumbermen and farmers," Kilmer said.

But as white people from East coast cities like New York moved in for the cheap land, the federal government was also in the process of consolidating and relocating native Tribes to the area from the southeast.

The Treaty of 1819 and the Treaty of 1836, both were treaties where Tribal communities all around Michigan gave up land to the United States Government, according to the Tribal Treaty database.

"(The Treaty of 1819) is signed in Saginaw, and that's why it's called the Treaty of Saginaw, but the land encompasses, really, the southern, southeastern half of Michigan that had yet to be ceded," Whitledge said. "The big one that's northwest, is the Treaty of 1836, which is what cedes most of the northern half of the lower peninsula, and a lot of the upper peninsula."

The relocation was also a result of the federal Treaty of 1855, which moved most of the tribes from the lower peninsula to the central part of the mitten, according to the Tribal Treaty database.

The Treaty of 1855 also set up a reserve in Isabella county, which would have the six townships of half of Union (Mount Pleasant), half of Chippewa, all of Denver, all of Isabella, all of Wise, all of Nottawa and all of Deerfield.

The financial takeover

"At the time the lumber industry was extremely profitable," Kilmer said.

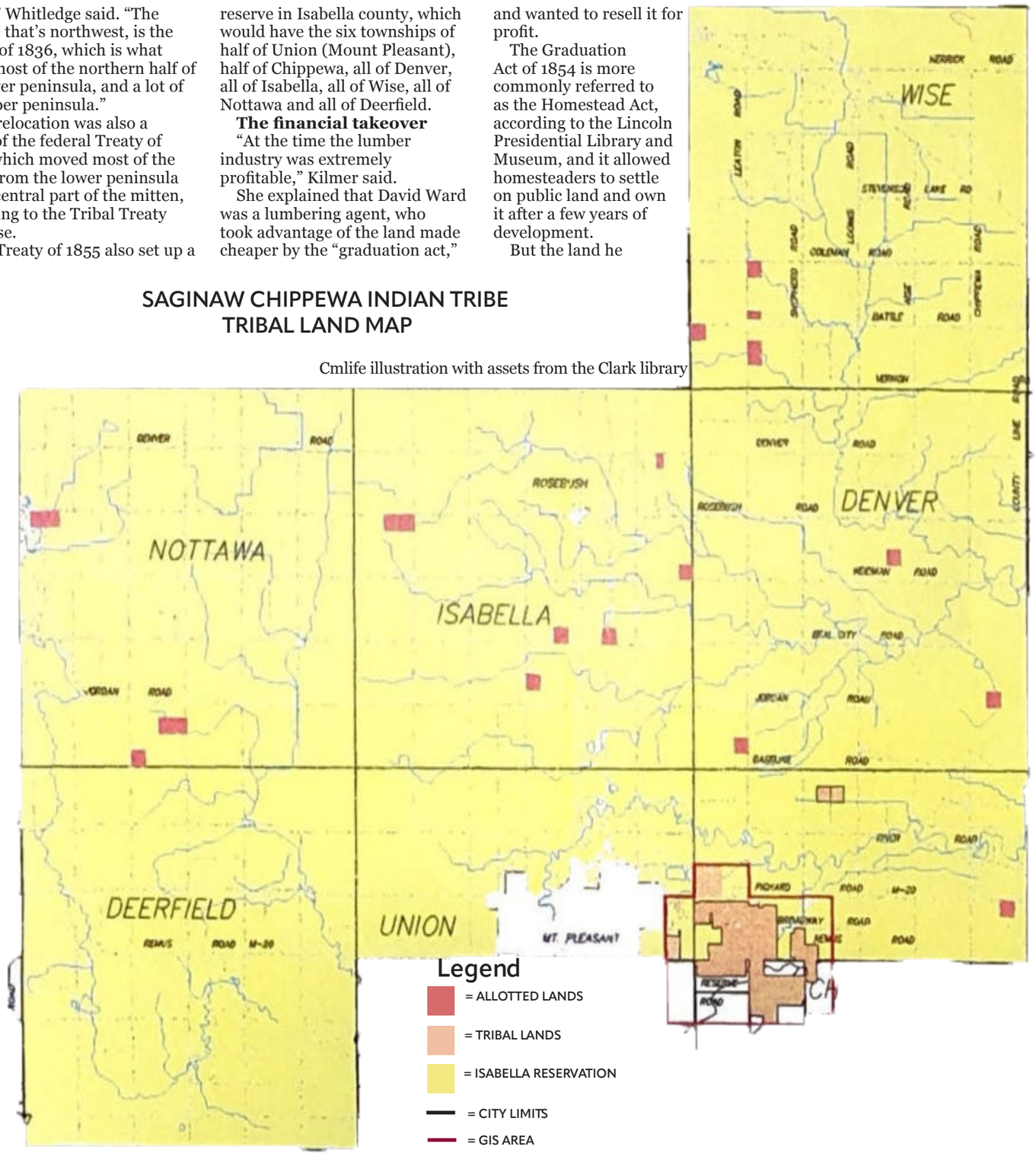
She explained that David Ward was a lumbering agent, who took advantage of the land made cheaper by the "graduation act," and wanted to resell it for profit.

The Graduation Act of 1854 is more commonly referred to as the Homestead Act, according to the Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and it allowed homesteaders to settle on public land and own it after a few years of development.

But the land he

SAGINAW CHIPPEWA INDIAN TRIBE
TRIBAL LAND MAP

Cmlife illustration with assets from the Clark library



Courtesy of the Clark Historical Library

Broadway St. dowtown 1970s

purchased, Kilmer said, was actually supposed to belong to the Tribe. She said Ward had federal connections to George McClellan who signed off on the purchase.

And what would make the land more profitable to sell, Kilmer said, than to make it the county seat?

Around 1860 when the vote took place to make Mount Pleasant the county seat, the population of the area was still dominated by members of the Tribe, she said.

"There was a lot of bribery," Kilmer said. "David Ward bribed a lot of people."

In 1872, the U.S Government started allocating land to the Indigenous population. However, this land did not fit the way of life that Indigenous people were living, which was summering on the lakes and wintering inland.

"You've given somebody who's lived that type of life 40 acres and said 'make a life," Whitledge said. "The land doesn't necessarily stay in Native hands very long."

They were in rough times, especially with being taxed too.

"Without knowing how to live the lifestyle of a farmer, Whitedge said the last option left for Natives was to sell their land."

As more white farmers moved into the area, they kept making deals to buy land from the tribe members.

"All of these men who came to Mount Pleasant ... would pray on the Chippewa men to sell their land," Kilmer said. "They were totally taken advantage of."

She said some of the deals "were like taking candy from a baby," because of the language barrier or because the white men got the Tribe members drunk before making a deal.

"(Our relationship) has never been good," Kilmer said. "They have a lot to be mad about. They don't trust us, and they shouldn't."

A boarding school

The "Mount Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School" was in operation from June 1893 to June 1934, according to the Ziibiwing Center. While there may have been some benefit to the teaching of skilled trades, it also decimated tribal culture, Kilmer said.

"The basic message was 'don't be a Chippewa, be like us white guys," she said.

"At the time, Mount Pleasant was happy to have it here, it brought jobs," Kilmer said. "The perspective of the time was that it taught Chippewa men how to be farmers. But this was the only opportunity for education of any type. Kids from Tribes weren't allowed in the public school.

"I... wasn't a good place to be."

The University of Michigan documented that the number of deaths at the school is unclear.

"The true number is in dispute as official documents only record five deaths, contrary to the knowledge of local tribe members and researchers who state that there were over 200 deaths at Indian Industrial," according to UofM research.

In addition to their findings that students were forced to cut their hair, speak only English and wear non-traditional clothing, conditions like overcrowding and unsanitary conditions led to outbreaks of diseases like smallpox.

"More deaths occurred because you have all these children in a concentrated area," Kilmer said.

The twentieth-century and beyond

The land exchanges continued until the federal government realized what they'd done, Kilmer said. There was a huge diaspora, where Tribe members had started leaving the area.

The change? The Wheeler-Howard Act, or Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, also known as the "Indian New Deal."

According to the national archives, this marked a major change in federal policy, allotting subsidies and reorganizing areas of land for the Tribes across the country.

In 2010, the Eastern District court in Michigan also ruled in favor of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe on a lawsuit against the state of Michigan, a decision that reaffirmed the Tribe's jurisdiction.

"The settlement declares the entire Isabella Reservation to be Indian Country, resolving longstanding disputes over the boundaries and existence of the Isabella reservation in south central Michigan," according to a press release from the Department of Justice in 2010.

"We'll never be able to undo the harm we did to them," Kilmer said. "We'll always be asking forgiveness."

The Saginaw Chippewa nation now holds an event to commemorate the closing of the boarding school, and behavioral health services are made available at (989) 775-4850.

> "... Most recently tokenism and people not acknowledging my Indigenous side until it becomes convenient for them..."
>
> CMU student
> Gabriel Ohngren

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Central Michigan Life's editorial and business offices are located at 436 Moore Hall, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI 48859, telephone (989) 774-3493 or 774-LIFE.

EDITORIAL

BIPOC student experience

Forced to go the extra mile

Central Michigan Life has had the chance to speak with students from all walks of life — Black, LGBTQ+, Hispanic, first-generation, Asian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jewish, white, Muslim and so on. What every student has made clear is the need for community, specifically among students of color.

In the past year, Central Michigan University has taken major losses with budget cuts, but the most impactful have been faculty and staff vacancies. Within the Center for Student Inclusion and Diversity, two major roles that serve student needs are currently vacant: Director of LGBTQ Services and Director of the Office of Indigenous Affairs.

Without educators and allies in these positions, students that identify in these communities are not receiving the support they need, deserve and were promised. According to the 2023-2028 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, CMU's focus for 2023-2024 is to promote a more inclusive community by developing a structure for units to promote DEI community engagement.

However, there is no trace of CMU putting together a search committee to fill these positions, let alone a public announcement to make it known to students, faculty and staff. How can we focus on creating an inclusive community without taking the first step in making sure students have resources and professionals they can identify with to receive guidance or aid? And to take matters even further, how can we do so without putting more allocated funds toward these efforts?

At CMU, a predominantly white campus, 25% of our student population identifies as a minority, according to CMU by the Numbers.

What the university fails to mention is that there are 14,423 students on campus as of the Fall 2023 semester, which does not count the retention rate for Spring 2024. When you say 25% of the student population is minority — sure that may seem like a number worth highlighting; however, according to Western Michigan University's demographics, its minority population is 25.1%, whereas Eastern Michigan University's is over 28% according to Data United States.

Therefore, CMU is currently showcasing average numbers for minority demographics. Nevertheless, we certainly won't discredit CMU's incredible administrators at the helm that are specifically working to better the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts here.

Thank you to those working behind the scenes for all of the policies, events and the work that you do to make this institution a welcoming school, home and community as much as you are allowed and able to do so.

Without the Center for Student Inclusion and Diversity (CSID), the office for Institutional Diversity, Equity and Involvement (OIDEI) and Student Activities and Involvement (SAI) — students of color would not have a place they could go to for guidance, acceptance, comfort and to just be themselves. Some of these efforts look like the Belonging Movement, having an imbedded multicultural counselor in CSID, incorporating religious policies for students to practice freely and just being supportive when students need a listening ear.

However, for those whose conversation about DEI revolves around emailing students apologies when a racist slur is found on their dorm room, showing up at the annual Martin Luther King CommUNITY Peace March and Vigil, attend heritage month events on campus or introducing Antiracist campaigns and letting them drop, students notice that.

CM Life will be hosting an open forum in honor of Black History Month for students of color to come in and share their stories, if comfortable, and to talk about what you would like to see from us — your platform and resource. The event is scheduled for 5 p.m. Feb. 21 in CM Life's office on the fourth floor of Moore Hall, and food and refreshments will be provided.

If you do not feel comfortable with participating in that event, but still just need an outlet in general, CSID has a dedicated counselor housed in its office located in the Bovee University Center room 104M. Elizabeth Husbands is a woman of color that has over 25 years' of experience working in the mental health field. To schedule an appointment, call 989-774-3381 or visit the website counsel.cmich.edu to request an appointment.

What are students of color experiencing at CMU?

Central Michigan Life talked to a student recipient of the Multicultural Advancement and Lloyd M. Cofer Scholarship (MAC) about their experience on campus as a student of color. The student wished to remain anonymous to protect their academic scholarship.

After being asked whether they feel supported on campus, the student said there are people within the previously mentioned offices that do make them feel supported. However, as for the university as a whole, the individual has not felt supported as a Black student on campus.

"I think there are steps and things that need to be done in order for that support to be shown," the student said. "I mean, look at the retention rates of colored students. Or even just the small things, taking the small steps to make sure that students have what they need and accessibility. People don't know about the Student Food Pantry, people don't know about these important necessity things, or even One Central sometimes ... things like that.

"Also, there's no accessible things for people of color on campus. Like, we're still working on Black haircare products. Those things should be up here already."

The student mentioned that they do not see particular cabinet members or the president of the university at any of the more targeted multicultural events, such as Black Hair Care, but instead making appearances at the "photo-op" outings like the MLK walk. The student also admitted they are not at every event on campus; however, when that lack of higher-up presence is noticed, it makes students feel unsupported and unheard.

Let's look back to "CMU by the Numbers." Out of the 14,423 students there are 3,605 students of color. Out of that 3,605 — 1,683 of those students are from India, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nigeria, Spain and so on. As for domestic BIPOC students there are 1,922.

Both of those numbers are as large as a high school population in a well-populated city. However, there are 10,818 white students — that is almost 10 high schools, combined — or more.

When you put students into numbers and look at it from this perspective, minority students are far outnumbered.

However, when you look at students as people, not as a statistic to the enrollment, retention and tuition rates, you may find that through interacting with students that they are people that all have

> "...they very much just assume that every black person does not have a dad or that their dad left."
>
> CMU student
> Darnaysia Bellamy

entirely unique experiences on campus, which just so happen to also impact CMU's buzz words of enrollment and retention.

CMU brings in more and more international students but lack the efforts to integrate them with the other student populations on campus. International students face the challenge of coming to an entirely foreign place when it comes to culture, race, religion, politics and even different ways of driving and the laws that come with that.

Many international students choose to come to America for schooling to take part in the different cultures that are here, on top of academics. However, without the university's support to bring all students together, it is extremely hard for those students to make friends that don't look like them on campus.

What international students and BIPOC students on campus have most in common is the fact that they both have to make the extra effort to find a community on campus. White students can go through an entire day only seeing other white people and not at all question their comfort or how isolated they feel. And when it comes to making friends, it comes down to whether they feel like talking.

However, for the minority population on campus those students have to go above and beyond to get involved in RSO's, seek out other people that look like them and go about their day getting ignored by white students who are not comfortable with being friends with people outside of their race. That is only scratching the surface of being the minority on a predominantly white campus.

"There is a lot of extra effort that you do have to put in being a Black student in the community," the anonymous student said. "Which is not fun ... because it's exhausting. And now you're taking time out of your day on top of million other things that you're doing."

A majority of students of color go through this isolating experience on campus.

The student said they went through culture shock when they first came to campus and stayed in the dorms. However, their experience with the MAC scholarship program is what made them decide to stay at CMU and they are very grateful to have that community.

The MAC program

Alfred Harper, assistant director for Multicultural Student Education, said it was disheartening to hear that comment from the MAC scholar who felt it was the only community they have on campus.

"But then it's also, I will say, a great piece of information to hear that one the community is serving the purpose that it's meant for," Harper said. "And not knowing who the person is but understanding that they may have identities to where they feel as if they would not have that — it shows the scholarship, the program and the value of experience that students are going through.

"It shows that CMU needs to really put forth more effort to ensure that individuals are learning about each other (and) have more opportunities to where students of all identities are learning about individuals holistically."

James Span, Jr., executive director of Student Inclusion and Diversity, said that hearing the student's statement about only having a community within the MAC program did not shock him.

"It is something that I have definitely heard pretty much over the entirety of my tenure here at the university," Span said.

He said the MAC program has been designed to create community for students.

"It's not by happenstance," Span said. "It's not something we just, you know, hold on to hope and say, 'Well, we hope they feel welcome, or we hope they feel.' No. We go out of our way to to be very intentional with the relationships that we build with our students. How we role model for our students, how we expect them (staff) to interact with their peers, underclassmen and upperclassmen."

Regardless of who students are, what classification they are in life, where they come from, Span said he does not take it for granted that when they leave the CSID that those students will be treated with the same level of respect or care elsewhere on campus. On one hand, it is disheartening, but on the other hand, he said it is enlightening to know he and his team are hitting the mark with the MAC program.

Harper said there are currently 250 MAC recipients. But what about the other 1,742 minority students that are not a part of the program? Or those who haven't gone the extra mile to get involved in RSOs because of how tiring it can be to put yourself out there as a young adult, but especially as a person of color on a majority white campus?

It is truly a privilege to not have to think about that. But for the students that do and the faculty and staff that recognize those experiences — it is disappointing to hear and see.

At the very least, the MAC scholarship has allowed students to meet different people from different backgrounds and teach one another about intersectionality and being curious and respectful of other peoples' cultures, races, backgrounds, religions and ethnicities.

"It showed me that I also wasn't the only person of color," the student said.

The program has contributed to most of the cultural events on campus. The student said there most likely would not be as many without it.

When asked about the increase in white students receiving the multicultural scholarship, the student said they see both sides — white students need to learn about intersectionality and respecting and being curious about other peoples' cultures, but it is also one of the most prominent opportunities on campus for minority students to receive financial aid.

Span said the program can be just as beneficial for a student from Southside Chicago than it is for a student from the Upper Peninsula.

He made the point that when it comes to the world outside of college, there are less-often times when students will experience a self-segregated environment.

"If we create an opportunity where we self-segregate, and we say 'This scholarship is awarded to individuals who hold that minoritized or marginalized identity only' and then we talk to them about all things DEI -- we talk about intersectionality and we talk about identity and we talk about intercultural communication, and we're talking about intercultural communication, but it's only between two people of color -- then that limits the impact that we can have," Span said.

How can CMU do more?

Span and Harper agreed that the university should be doing more to provide fiscal resources and scholarship opportunities specifically for students of color, just as the university has recently done for first-generation students.

"They have access to funds because of that identity," Span said. "I think there should be more; I need to find populations that warrant fiscal support."

Although the MAC scholarship is open to all due to the affirmative action policy to not discriminate against applicants based on their race, it should be a requirement for all students to have some sort of DEI training and hands on experience.

"Again, is it great to have white students learn more about culture? Absolutely," the student said. "But that shouldn't just be multicultural requirements, which is another problem I have with the university. ... This should not just be a requirement for multicultural students.

"It should be a requirement for everybody to learn about diversity and inclusion and how to be inclusive and not just on a racial level, but also with gender inequalities and different identities ... and religious aspects too. These are things that we should all know by the time you graduate, not just MAC scholars."

Many students experience being away from home for the first time on campus and being away from their own "society and what your society that you come from has taught you," the student said.

> "As a confident African American male, because of my skin color, most people would perceive me as being 'threatening' and less than [others]."
>
> CMU student
> Jordan Wade

Therefore, by having all students required to engage in DEI education, the student said that it's a good way to break that thought process and challenge it.

Harper agreed. He said it is important that it is not just MAC scholars taking the time to learn about the value of each other's identities and other cultures.

"It's not MAC scholars that are essentially stereotyping or showing this act of discrimination towards other students, it's those of the majority identity," Harper said.

All students should be highly encouraged to attend DEI-related events, not just for a scholarship or class, but out of sheer curiosity and the willingness to learn and step outside of their comfort zone, Harper said.

However, more opportunities and requirements such as that mandate funding, which is a term that DEI offices on campus would like to hear more often — and not budget cuts, which can be seen across campus as well.

"It's hard being a person of color living in Mount Pleasant," the student said. "It's uncomfortable, to be honest. You don't have access to the resources you need. ... It can be terrifying because it's a mostly white town. Sometimes it's not the safest environment for a person of color. And sometimes it may be hard to express yourself and people don't understand your backgrounds."

With extra funding going toward DEI, the university would be investing into its favorite words: enrollment and retention. But what should really be important to the university is students feeling safe and accepted on campus — not having to seek that safety themselves when they have already put themselves out of their comfort zones to move away from home and go to college knowing no one.

Going into the unknown

As of the end of the school year on Dec. 31, 2024, President Bob Davies will be resigning from CMU. Students, staff and faculty have been discussing what the future will look like for the univeristy and who the potential next president will be — and will they be up to the task for adhering to the needs that are not currently being met?

"I feel like whoever needs to or is going to take over next has a lot of work to do in order to help the university to go forward," the student said. "And if that person can't do it, then we're going to be stuck where we are, and we're going to be confused (as to) why we have such low enrollment and all these things."

To the next president of CMU and to the white students that do not open themselves to new friendships and new lessons: There is much work to be done. Get comfortable with the uncomfortable, and you may just be surprised by what you are capable of, the people you meet along the way and the lessons and knowledge that can be exchanged.

To the students of color on campus: Stop by the CM Life office on the fourth floor of Moore Hall in room 436 sometime. We want to hear from you and spread the word about your experience to make a difference. We want you to feel safe and comfortable when you walk into our office or interact with our staff — we will do so.

Let us celebrate Black History Month together and engage in these tough conversations. As CM Life said in the 2023 Black History Month editorial — a month is not enough to recognize people and their lived experiences.

Let us strive to treat others the way they want to be treated. That, in turn, comes with needing to be curious about how others would like to be treated and what our cultural differences may be.

Do what you need to do to go the extra mile and make your peers feel welcome, so that when it comes to students speaking about their experiences at CMU and whether they have a community inside and outside their race, we can all say, "we do."

"Growing up, the models I'd see online or the actors in entertainment who were considered beautiful were never the girls who looked like me... It took me a very long time to realize just because I am not white doesn't mean I can't be beautiful."

CMU student
Jada Quinn

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UPCOMING EVENTS

> "For me everyday outside of home is a challenge in itself, and most people don't understand that."
>
> CMU student
> Yel Pilgrim

2/8

Thursday

Medical Bias Against Black Women: A Continuing Conversation on Education and Advocacy to Promote Justice

Host: Faith in Femininity

5:30 p.m.

EHS Building Room 230

2/12

Monday

Valor and Resilience: The Legacy of Black Veterans

Host: Madison Coleman

6 p.m.

Opperman Auditorium in Park Library

2/13

Tuesday

Though the Lens: Reimagining Role of Black Film Played in the Realm of Advocacy

Host: Ku'Juana Quinn

6 p.m.

Opperman Auditorium in Park Library

2/15

Thursday

NPHC/ Divine 9 and the History of Black Greek Letter Organizations on College Campuses

Host: NPHC

6 p.m.

Opperman Auditorium in Park Library

2/16

Friday

Black Care Starts Somewhere

Host: Makayla Osborn

7 p.m.

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‘I want the students to know I love ‘em’

By Lauren Rice
News editor

Students, faculty and staff received notice of President Bob Davies’ resignation last Wednesday, Jan. 31. In the press conference following Tuesday’s Board of Trustees meeting, he explained why he is departing.

The presidential conference room on the third floor of the Central Michigan University Bovee Center was a packed house at 11 a.m. on Feb. 6, as people gathered to watch the full session of the Board of Trustees.

The space was standing-room-only, filled with people and the buzz of conversation and an emotional weight for many.

On the agenda was the usual: a report of the university president and the recognition of faculty and staff members receiving emeritus rank. Next to the unusual: an update on the search for a new president.

“I’ve got 11 months, and my goal is very simple: this university,” Davies said.

Davies said his decision to leave was a personal one, motivated by a need to spend time with his family, especially his wife.

“We haven’t had a family vacation where it was just the two of us, and it’s a time now where we’re in a position to do that,” Davies said.

Despite the challenges, he said -- referencing enrollment numbers and the COVID-19 pandemic -- the people at this university kept him going.

“CMU students, they’re gritty, every day they work hard,” Davies said. “It’s amazing what they’re able to achieve, so I want the students to know I love ‘em.”

The search for a new president formally began during the meeting, as Chair Todd Regis designated Trustee Denise Williams Mallett to lead the search committee.

Mallett said the search committee, according to university bylaws, must have between 13 to 19 people on it, including community, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and university members.

The authority of Mallett to lead the committee, establish search parameters and negotiate terms of the agreement with the next president passed almost unanimously, only one trustee abstained.

Davies shared what he would tell the incoming president, whoever that ends up being.

“There’s a little secret among university presidents: there’s always an envelope in the desk,” Davies said. “When you walk into the office for the first time and you leave, you leave a letter.

“And my letter will say ‘embrace the students.’”

Nico Mendoza | Visual editor

CMU President Bob Davies, left, and Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs Stan Shingles, right, embrace after Shingles’ speech, Tuesday, Feb. 6, in the Bovee University Center. Shingles is retiring after more than 34 years with CMU.

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THE
BEST
OF
CENTRAL MICHIGAN
2023
23RD ANNUAL
READER'S CHOICE
AWARDS

Raising the Curtain on Local Businesses

Welcome to The Best!

With the help of our readers, Central Michigan Life is pleased to announce the 23rd annual Best of Central Michigan Readers' Choice Awards. On behalf of our staff and our local businesses, we would like to thank you for taking the time to submit ballots for your favorite people, places and things in the Mount Pleasant area. It's an honor to help you help us identify the best bites, sites and likes across Isabella County.

More than 1,000 people showed the love to their favorites of 2023. Voting was conducted during December 2023, and CM Life readers casted more than 6,000 votes in 48 categories. Certificates and window decals have been delivered to your favorites; we know you will be able to spot them because they will proudly be displayed in storefronts and offices through the area.

We hope you will use this special edition as a guide for future purchases, visits and memberships to these local businesses and organizations. By turning the pages today, you will learn about our readers' selections and what makes the winners stand out in our community.

Whether it is the best place to drink a beer or get your back cracked, CM Life has your favorites featured here.

Congratulations to all the businesses that were selected as winners or runner ups. We are happy to have you in our community, providing our town of 21,000 with the amenities, goods and services one would expect to find in a much larger city!

Thank you again to our readers and community members who helped to choose the Best of Central Michigan.

THANK YOU!

For voting us your favorites in 12 categories!

WAYSIDE NIGHTCLUB

1st Place, Best Place to Dance
2nd Place, Best Bar

O'Kelly's Sports Bar & Grille

1st Place, Best Place to Karaoke
1st Place,Best Pizza
3rd Place, Best Bar
3rd Place, Best Happy Hour
3rd Place, Best Place to Hear Live Music
3rd Place, Best Cocktail and Appetizer

The Cabin

Rubbles

2nd Place, Best Place to Hear Live Music
2nd Place, Best Place to Karaoke

3rd place, Best Place to Karaoke
2nd place, Best Local Brewery

Hunter's Ale House

FOOD & DINNER

BEST BAR
The Bird Bar and Grill
(989) 772-2493
223 S. Main St.
facebook.com/BirdBarM

Popular downtown watering hole, The Bird features a laid-back environment in which to play some pool and enjoy a round – or two – with friends.

BEST SWEET TREAT PLACE
Doozie's Ice Cream Place
(989) 772-2332
1310 E. Pickard St.
facebook.com/Doozies.Ice.Cream.Place

Doozie's, open from April to September, serves over 90 flavors of Arctic Swirl and 20 types of hand-dipped ice cream, as well as sundaes, milkshakes, malts, and floats to suit any dietary needs.

BEST BREAKFAST PLACE
The Diner
(989) 775-7210
894 S. Mission St.
thediner989.com

When it comes to fueling your day, The Diner, a local favorite, serves various homestyle breakfast dishes such as omelets, pancakes, and sandwiches, among other options.

BEST ASIAN RESTAURANT
Hunan House
(989) 772-7386
2157 S Mission St
hunanhousemi.com

Local favorite Hunan House offers a wide variety of favorite Chinese dishes, sushi, hibachi and pad Thai. Order in, take it out or swing by for a lunch special
.

BEST COFFEE SHOP
Ponder Coffee Co.
(989)-317-0808
Multiple locations
Pondercoffee.co

Locally owned fan favorite Ponder offers coffee and espresso, non-coffee drinks, breakfast and lunch. Four unique locations on campus and throughout the city keep readers fired up.

BEST FOOD TRUCK
Nom Nom Ninja
(989) 506-5340
nom-nom-ninja.business.site

Mobile caterer Nom Nom Ninja has put a handheld spin on traditional steakhouse hibachi. The locally owned and operated mobile caterer is once again our readers' pick for best food truck.

BEST FAST FOOD RESTAURANT
Dog Central
(989) 317-3076
111 E. Michigan St.
dogcentralmp.com

Things like applewood smoked bacon, mac 'n' cheese, shredded pickle, chili, crushed Fritos and peanut butter make Dog Central a fan favorite for fast food.

BEST MEXICAN RESTAURANT
Los Aztecas
(989) 775-8594
4445 E. Blue Grass Road
losaztecasmtp.com

Repeat winner Los Aztecas is best known for its sizzling Jalisco Mexican cuisine, its cold, blended beverages and its warm, colorful atmosphere.

BEST CAMPUS DINING
Dine & Connect
(989) 775-7210
East Community (Emmons, Herrig, Saxe and Woldt Halls)
dineoncampus.com/cmichdining/dine—connect

Feeling famished? CMU's overwhelming pick for best campus dining went to Dine & Connect in East Community. Offerings include customized salads, sandwiches, global cuisine, burgers and fresh pizza.

BEST HAMBURGER
Freddie's Tavern
(989) 773-2180
705 S. Adams St.
freddiestavernmp.com

With burger options that range from jalapenos to mushrooms Freddie's Tavern is a fan favorite. Stop in for the food but stay for the atmosphere.

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2305 Hawthorn Drive Suite C, Mt. Pleasant

BEST SANDWICH SHOP

Max and Emily's
(989) 772-7460
125 E. Broadway St.
maxandemilys.com

Long-time local favorite Max and Emily's specializes in serving classic and custom sandwiches all made from locally sourced ingredients. Who knows, they may even name one after you.

BEST RESTAURANT

Mountain Town Station
(989) 775-2337
506 W. Broadway St.
mountaintown.com

Mountain Town Station serves meals like seafood, pasta, pizza and pub sandwiches, and unique appetizers. The former train station boasts a patio to enjoy for the warmer months.

Texas Roadhouse
(989) 775-7427
2177 S. Mission St.
texasroadhouse.com

Texas Roadhouse serves unique steaks and classic cuts like sirloin, prime rib and bone-in ribeye. This chain restaurant, with over 700 locations nationwide, is also a great place to watch sports.

BEST HANGOVER FOOD

McDonald's
Multiple locations
mcdonalds.com

When the dog's hair coats their mouths, our readers turn to an American favorite to relieve the ache. McDonald's is the go-to hangover cure, thanks to its low costs and 24-hour drive-through.

BEST LATE-NIGHT EATERY

Dog Central
(989) 317-3076
111 E. Michigan St.
dogcentralmp.com

Things like applewood smoked bacon, mac 'n' cheese, shredded pickle, chili, crushed Fritos and peanut butter make Dog Central a fan favorite for fast food.

BEST PLACE FOR A COCKTAIL & APPETIZERS

Midori Sushi and Martini Lounge
(989) 775-7723
105 E. Broadway St.
midorimp.com

Perennial pick Midori maintains high standards in quality and freshness, pairing fresh ingredients like duck breast, oysters and salmon salad with traditional favorites such as sushi rolls.

BEST LOCAL BREWERY & WINERY

Mountain Town Brewing Company
(989) 400-4666
3068 Jen's Way
mountaintownbrew.com

Mountain Town Brewing Co. continues to grow its menu concept, wine inventory and beer recipes, as well as offer events to help patrons enjoy both their drinks and their visit.

BEST UNIQUE FOOD

Taichi Bubble Tea
(989) 317-4002
1035 S. Mission St.
taichibubbletea.com

With its friendly atmosphere, Taichi Bubble Tea offers nutritious, delicious ramen, sushi, bubble teas, smoothies, crushes and hot drinks, in an assortment of unique flavors.

BEST PLACE FOR LUNCH

Max and Emily's
(989) 772-7460
125 E. Broadway St.
maxandemilys.com

Long-time local favorite Max and Emily's specializes in serving classic and custom sandwiches all made from locally sourced ingredients. Who knows, they may even name one after you.

BEST PIZZA PLACE

The Cabin
(989) 779-9167
930 West Broomfield St.
cabinmp.com

A CMU tradition, The Cabin is this year's pick for the best place to get pizza. Try a custom-made pie or the infamous cabin sticks.

SERVICES

BEST APARTMENT

Copper Beech
(989) 779-8300
4750 E. Blue Grass Road
copperbeech-mtpleasant.com

In a student-oriented community just minutes from campus, Copper Beech offers single- and multi-room townhomes and apartments. Amenities include in-unit laundry, walk-in closets, a pool and 24-hour gym access.

BEST NON-GREEK RSO

Feminist Leaders on Campus
flocatcmu@gmail.com

CMU's favorite non-Greek RSO is The Feminist Leaders on Campus (FLOC). It promotes intersectionality, activism, education, inclusivity and service on campus, in the community and around the world.

BEST ATTORNEY

Barberi Law Firm
(989) 773-3423
2305 Hawthorne Drive, Suite C
barberilawfirm.com

Barberi Law firm serves the Mount Pleasant area with numerous areas of practice, including criminal defense, personal injury, family law, estate planning, workers' compensation and more.

BEST AUTO SERVICE & REPAIR

Auto Service and Repair
(989) 772-9500
1001 N. Fancher Ave.
dagwoodsautorepair.com

Dagwood's Auto Repair, Inc. has experienced mechanics that provide full tire and auto service for customers from all over Michigan. Services include brake repair, engine repair, oil changes, preventative maintenance, tire installation and more.

BEST CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

Holly Hoffman

Human Development and Family Studies. Prof. Holly Hoffman is once again the most popular academic on campus. Her study ranges from the development of humor in youngsters to teacher professional development.

BEST SELFIE SPOT

The Seal

Break out those cameras and head to Warriner Mall and its monolithic concrete seal for the best, reader-supported, selfie in town.

BEST NEW/USED CAR DEALER

Krapohl Ford & Lincoln
(800) 772-5974
1415 E. Pickard St.
krapohlford.com

Krapohl Ford & Lincoln is the community's top spot for a new or used vehicle. It offers car, truck and RV sales and the Quick Lane Tire & Auto Center to keep clients safely on the road.

BEST TATTOO & BODY PIERCING BUSINESS

Evolved ArtForms
(989) 775-8288
1222 S. Mission St., Suite B
facebook.com/EvolvedArt

For our self-expressing readers, the top place for a tattoo or body piercing is Evolved ArtForms. It offers affordable, walk-in services and appointments blocks from campus.

BEST BEST PLACE TO HEAR LIVE MUSIC

Soaring Eagle Casino Resort
(888)-732-4537 6800
Soaring Eagle Blvd.
soaringeaglecasino.com

The Soaring Eagle Casino Resort is yet again Central Michigan's favorite place to hear live music. The resort attracts celebrated artists of all genres and generations, year-round.

BEST GROCERY STORE

Meijer
(989) 772-4700
1015 E. Pickard St.
meijer.com

Perennial favorite Meijer once again took the crown for the community's top grocer, although it features much more, including groceries, electronics, clothing and household essentials.

BEST GOLF COURSE

Bucks Run Golf Club
(989) 773-6830
1559 S. Chippewa Road
bucksrun.com

Bucks Run Golf Club, with 18 holes, expansive patios, an on-site golf shop and a full-service restaurant, is the community's favorite place to tee off. Fore!

BEST GYM/HEALTH CLUB

Student Activity Center
(989) 774-3686
cmich.edu/student-life/clubs-and-recreation/university-recreation/university-recreation-facilities/student-activity-center

From group classes to lap swimming, when it came to the best places to let off some steam, CMU's Student Activities Center (SAC) reigns supreme.

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BEST STUDENT MEDIA PODCAST
SCM Life Crime Time
(989) 774-5433
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cm-life.com

"CM-Life Crime Time" delves into the intriguing stories and real-life riddles of genuine crime. Abby Zimmerman, the host, narrates the tension, intrigue, and insight into the criminal mentality.

BEST SALON/SPA
Salon Blu Day Spa & Boutique
(989) 772-8898
121 S University Ave
salon-blu.com

Indulge in luxury, serenity and style at Salon Blu Day Spa & Boutique. Skilled technicians provide salon, nail, spa and bridal services to help clients look and feel their best.

BEST VETERINARIAN
Mount Pleasant Animal Hospital
(989) 773-7679
1611 S. Isabella Road
mtpanimalhospital.com

When a furry, feathered or scaled family member is in need of a doctor, our readers look to Mount Pleasant Animal Hospital. This clinic offers check-ups, medical and surgical care, six days per week.

BEST JEWELRY STORE
Ace of Diamonds
(989) 779-9919
406 South Mission St.
aceofdiamondsjewelry.net

When bling beckons, Ace of Diamonds is the community's best bet. The store offers a wide selection of engagement rings, Pandora bracelets, estate jewelry and more.

BEST CHIROPRACTOR
Central Michigan Family Chiropractic Clinic
(989) 779-2225
1112 E. Broomfield St.
mtpleasantchiropractors.com

Central Michigan Family Chiropractic Clinic, ran by Dr. Troy Henrie and staff, uses the most current and effective methods for treatment to help patients on their pain relief journey.

BEST CANNABIS BUSINESS
JARS Cannabis
(989) 572-0400
1207 E. Pickard St.
jarscannabis.com/mi/mt-pleasant

JARS Cannabis is a medical and recreational dispensary that offers over 100 strains across a variety of products and price points.

BEST PLACE TO BUY VINYL
B's Music
(989) 773-0777
613 N Mission St.
shop.bsmusicshop.com

B's Music, an independently owned instrument and record store, offers new and used vinyl, effects pedals, books, instruments and the area's most comprehensive lesson program.

ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

BEST HAPPY HOUR
Applebee's Grill and Bar
(989) 779-2766
4929 E. Pickard St.
applebees.com

Applebee's Grill and Bar remains Central Michigan's top happy hour destination. Whether you're relaxing after work or getting ready for the night, the drink specials heighten the experience.

BEST PLACE TO DANCE
Wayside/O'Kelly's
(989) 772-2391
2000 S. Mission St.
facebook.com/waysidemp

Wayside/O'Kelly's is once again our readers' pick for the best spot to boogie. This perennial favorite is one of the largest nightclubs in Central Michigan.

BEST PLACE TO KARAOKE
The Cabin
(989) 779-9167
930 West Broomfield St.
www.cabinmp.com

A CMU tradition, The Cabin is this year's pick for the best place to get pizza. Try a custom-made pie or the infamous cabin sticks.

BEST BEST PLACE TO BUY VINTAGE/THRIFT SHOP
Goodwill Industries
(989) 773-4884
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goodwill.org

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Climate alert

CMU professor, administrators speak on environmental racism

By Renae King
Staff reporter

Environmental racism is an issue that has become deeply rooted in many communities across the nation, disproportionately affecting communities of color and leaving behind a trail of irreversible consequences according to Cedric Taylor, a professor at Central Michigan University.

This leads some students to grapple with the ripple effects of environmental racism, affecting their transition to predominantly white communities.

Taylor, an associate professor of sociology, has spent time researching environmental justice. He said one of the most decisive factors in exposure to environmental harms and injustices is the color of a person's skin.

"The reality is that communities of color are more likely to be proximate to environmental harms and exposures," he said. "They're more likely to be encountering things like contamination, air pollution, noise pollution."

Taylor said people of color are also less likely to be involved in the decision making processes that contribute to the environmental challenges in their communities.

"Once there is an issue, an environmental event, communities have a difficult time usually in getting the situation remedied," he said.

Residents in these communities also often face redlining issues, which is a discriminatory practice used to withhold certain services such as loans or insurance from those living in areas classified as "hazardous."

Environmental racism can often lead to increased risks for health problems such as cancer and respiratory issues.

However, the consequences of environmental racism extend beyond physical health and can affect the mental health of minority individuals. Stress, strain and a lack of resources to address these issues can compound, affecting the mental health of these communities Taylor said.

"We can only imagine the kind of emotional and mental fallout from being a second class citizen in a country that says all people are equal," Taylor said. "That we all deserve the same kinds of protections under the law."

Taylor said that the effects of environmental racism can follow people and students from communities where environmental racism is highly prevalent in areas with fewer cases such as Mount Pleasant.

"The spaces that we occupy are very much connected," he said. "The health issues ... the mental impact, you can't exactly go and switch those off. Once you enter CMU, you can carry these experiences into these other spaces." From struggle to **solace**

D'Naughtia Curry, a senior at CMU, said moving from her hometown to Mount Pleasant presented a unique challenge for her.

Growing up in Pontiac, Michigan, Curry said she was used to being around Black and Hispanic communities, which made up a majority of the population.

The city of Pontiac has a long history of redlining, which has caused many of the lower-class residents into lower-income neighborhoods– many of these residents being people of color.

Curry, who is African American herself, said she has noticed the gentrification of many of these redlined areas throughout the years.

"My town before – it used to be very vibrant," she said. "But now I think a lot of places are becoming more and more expensive, so it forces those people to migrate out of those areas."

Since coming to CMU, she hasn't seen a similar situation in Mount Pleasant, which she believes is due to the larger white population in the city.

"It was a culture shock for me," she said. "Being around so many people who did not look like me or did not look like the people I grew up with, that was very hard. So, I had negative feelings being on campus."

Curry came to CMU to pursue a career in public relations. She said she encountered many hurdles during her initial years at CMU, which was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a recipient of the Leader Advancement Scholarship, she was also a part of the LAS community living in Calkins Hall, which she said was predominately white.

"I felt like such an outsider," Curry said. "I didn't have any friends during that time, so I was just really discouraged."

Despite her struggles, Curry said she was eventually able to find solace by engaging with different organizations and speaking with various, diverse groups on campus.

As the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee chair for the International Student Organization, Curry now helps other students adapt to life on campus.

She said many of the students she talks to struggle with homesickness and language barriers, but also issues many domestic students wouldn't think twice about, such as how and where to print off papers.

As a first generation college student, Curry said she can relate to many of these students as she said she was often left to figure things out herself.

"Nobody has been telling me these things, but I have to pick them up," she said. "So, I think the issue a lot of the time for students is the lack of resources and the lack of understanding of those resources."

Curry said that while resources for other students of color are available, many students struggle with them as they often need to take the initiative to access them.

"I think if I as a person miss out on some of the opportunities that are offered to minority students or students of color, I think there's a lot more students who are missing out on those opportunities," she said.

Mary Martinez, the executive director of the Office of Civil Rights and Institutional Equity, said CMU offers a range of resources for people of color on campus including the counseling center, the Office of Multicultural Student Success and the resource center within each college.

"We're here for anyone if you need something, even if you don't know where to go," Martinez said. "I'm here to help facilitate getting people to the right place."

Shawna Patterson-Stephens, the chief diversity officer for the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, said her office is also continuously looking to improve the campus climate for everyone.

"We're always thinking about ways to provide equitable support to minoritized populations in a way that ensures that they have full enjoyment of what it means to be a student a faculty staff member here," she said.

> "Growing up in a predominantly white community, I always felt ashamed of my hair ... I had to hide it because it wasn't 'normal.' I would get fun of for wearing it naturally, and it created a negative relationship with how I view my hair. After moving to a more diverse community at college, I realized my hair is beautiful and deserves recognition. I still struggle with wearing it naturally and being confident, but it's a step in the right direction"
>
> Marissa Mengesha
> Clarkston native

Exploring Hispanic culture in Mount Pleasant

By Courtney Boyd
Reporter

Photo credit | Soli Gordon

CMU senior and President of Ballet Folklorico de la Luz, Regina Araujo-Pedroza performs at Spring Main-Stage on Friday, Jan. 26, in Finch Fieldhouse. (CM-Life | Soli Gordon)

Central Michigan University is home to over 500 Hispanic undergraduate students, according to a data report from 2022. As a result, these students bring their culture to the Mount Pleasant community and establish connections with others in the community.

Four people in the area have done just that. *Central Michigan Life* spoke with these people to learn what their culture means to them and how they have become staples of the community.

Dance can be 'moving': Regina Araugo-Pedroza

Regina Araugo-Pedroza is a senior at CMU and the president of Ballet Folklorico de la Luz, a registered student organization on campus known for its performances at campus events, such as at cultural festivals and Rock Rally.

"When I get on stage, I feel more confident than in everyday life," she said.

Araugo-Pedroza grew up in Royal Oak, Michigan. While her father came from Guantajuato, Mexico, she said he didn't teach her much about her culture as he didn't want her to face the same discrimination he did.

"When you're a kid, you don't know much about race, it's taught to you," she said. "My mother was the one to make sure I never lost that part of my identity."

When she was 6 years old, Araugo-Pedroza learned classical ballet, but she said it never felt like it fit her. At 14, she attended a talent show called the "Annual Show for Blue Lake Fine Arts." It was here she watched a woman perform the Folklorico style of dance, and she said it moved her to tears.

"It was the first time I felt so emotionally connected to my culture," she said.

From there, Araugo-Pedroza started researching the style of dance and where it originated, in which she found it was a state close to her father's birthplace: Jalisco, Mexico.

Her parents noticed her interest and were able to get her lessons in another area of Detroit. Within months, she went from beginner level classes to advanced placement classes.

"When I perform, I feel like a different side of me is unlocked," she said. "I feel a special connection to it. It's a way for me to connect to my relatives in Mexico all the way from Michigan."

When Araugo-Pedroza arrived at Central, she knew she wanted to start a dance group. Despite the trials of starting in the heart of COVID-19 pandemic, she built up the RSO and taught the members everything she knew about Folklorico.

"My dancers inspire me every day," she said. "I feel like a family with them, because they've all gone through similar things as me with our culture."

She also said their performances take inspiration from Jalisco and Baja-California,as well as their costumes, or vestuarios. "We wanted to make it represent the region(s) but not take away from it," she said.

She designed the dress herself, sketching it out and working with a seamstress to bring it to life.

The dress is adored with ribbons from the indigenous culture of Mexico, and there is a garment in a middle called a rebozo, which resembles a shawl or scarf and she said it's a prized possession to women in Mexico.

"Women who own one tend to have them for life," she said.

The dress also has buttons on it inspired by the ones on male dancer's pants, which tend to decorate the sides of the pant leg. On the dress, they serve as collar buttons.

Araugo-Pedroza said that the group isn't just open to Hispanics, but to all races and ethnicities. She said it's never too late for anyone to learn Folklorico, and many of her dancers started with no knowledge whatsoever and worked their way up.

"This is one of the biggest ways to show cultural appreciation to me," she said. "It doesn't matter who you are. Don't let anyone tell you what to do or who you should be... Don't let them taint your perception of yourself."

Araugo-Pedroza is set to graduate in May of this year, and she said that her other dancers will be able to take on more leadership roles in the club once she does.

"It has been a wonderful four years," she said. "My biggest hope is that they continue the legacy, and I'm excited to see what they do."

Connected with nature: Leo Jurado

Uncle John's Cider Mill is a family farm located in Saint Johns, about an hour south of Mount Pleasant.

The farm relies on apples, growing six different types along with other crops, and uses them to make cider, pies and more. The farm accomplishes this with the help of its permanent and temporary Hispanic workers.

Leo Jurado, 20, is an electrician apprentice working in Riverdale, Michigan. In his youth, he was one of the permanent residents at Uncle John's Cider Mill and has fond memories of the place.

He said his parents are the main ones working there now, with his father being a supervisor and his mother being a field worker. He shared that they immigrated from Chihuahua and Mexico City respectively before he was born, and he was the first child of theirs to be born in the United States.

"My parents didn't really teach us our Mexican culture and roots," Jurado said. "They wanted to make sure we had enough. I wouldn't say the bare necessities, a little more than that. We weren't struggling, but we worked to obtain the kind of life we had."

He said he has five other siblings, and they all started

working on the farm when they turned 13 years old. He would do chores on the farm, such as harvesting, planting and pruning crops like blueberries, apples and pumpkins. They also helped decorate and set up fences for parking for upcoming events.

"We'd probably start planting in about May or June," Jurado said. "Harvesting season wouldn't end until mid-November, early December range."

He said that although his parents owned a trailer about 40 minutes away, they lived on the farm for convenience in a building known as "the cabin." He described it as two buildings spilt in half, with two bedrooms and a kitchen and living room combined. While he and his family had one area, migrant workers who came temporarily would live in the other areas.

Jurado said his family was the "main" permanent family on the farm compared to the migrant workers that came and went. As a result, he said they had a close bond with the owners of the farm. He said the owners helped his family eventually buy a house within Saint Johns.

"I've always been around them since I was a little kid," he said. "I would say I have a really good understanding of their family and they have a really good understanding of mine."

Jurado said he had some fond memories with his family on the farm, and one thing he liked the most was the time between planting and harvesting seasons.

"I always enjoyed watching the apples blossom, I think it's very pretty," he said. "I feel like I'm very connected to nature with the amount of time I would spend outside in it."

While he said he disliked doing the chores as a child, he is grateful for the upbringing he had because it shaped him into the person he is today.

"Without all of us contributing and helping my parents, I don't know if I would have the life I do now," Jurado said. "I have a lot of trust in my family. I noticed my family is a lot closer than other families I've met... And I'm grateful for that, cause not everyone can say that."

Spicing things up: Jose and Luis Torres

Mount Pleasant is home to a variety of restaurants, including two sister restaurants owned by two brothers.

Los Aztecas is a Mexican grill and bar restaurant, described by the owners as being colorful and attracting a louder, rowdier crowd, as compared to its younger sister restaurant. El Jinete, is said to appeal to older residents and is a more formal environment.

Both businesses are co-owned by Jose and Luis Torres, 36 and 31 respectively. They are two of the oldest siblings out of a set of 12, with five other brothers and five sisters. Born in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, they said their family had been in the restaurant business since the 1980s, with their father starting out at a restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia.

It wouldn't be until they each turned 16 that they started working at restaurants in America. Luis said he remembers having to work his way up from a busboy to a dishwasher to eventually a cook. Ten years later, he now owns his own restaurant.

"It's easy when you love food and love working in this environment," Luis said.

Jose said he originally was on vacation to Mount Pleasant when a friend of his offered to show them the building Los Aztecs is now in. He saw the potential in the place and took the leap to open his own restaurant there.

It did so well that they were able to open their sister restaurant, El Jinete, in a building that was formerly a Ruby Tuesday and completely renovate it into what it is today.

"Sometimes we think about it and just don't believe it," Luis said. "He's (Jose's) not afraid of failing. He's always said our head will get us places, and it has. We just have to stay focused and positive even in hard times."

Jose said their businesses thrive due to their experimental cooking style. He said they are never afraid to try new recipes and bring classic dishes from their family teachings onto the menu. Some of these dishes include their birria (a type of Mexican stew), their tacos inspired by traditional Mexican street tacos, and a three pound burrito called burrito gigante.

"We have a variety of dishes around that others don't," Jose said. "We want to blow people's minds and taste buds... We take pride in that."

"Not all restaurants are willing to try new things," Luis said. "We like to see what's trending and adapt."

The brothers said they use their restaurants to give back to the community and local schools. Luis said they have catered food for CMU athletes, and Jose said they donated food to a family after a deer broke into their home a few months ago. They both agreed that they value the connections they've made with people through the business more than anything.

"The local support is great," Luis said. "Our regulars go back and forth between restaurants. They know us by name and even know our families."

"It doesn't feel like work. It's like they say: When you choose what you love, you never work a day in your life."

Jose said that he's grateful to be part of the Mount Pleasant community, and that his business can contribute to it.

"It's not about the money," he said. "It's what you leave behind. It's what you bring to your town and family, and I'm grateful for all of it."

They said they have high hopes for the future of the business, and are hoping to establish connections with Hispanic RSOs at CMU like Ballet Folklorico de la Luz. They are also considering opening a third restaurant closer to Midland.

"Growing up I always felt like I had two seperate world — my own world and everywhere else. My family and I kept our culture under our own roof because I learned the hard way that if I touched white spaces, I'd experience consequences. Being called 'Dora' when I spoke the language spoken in my household, my classmates gagging when I brought leftovers for lunch, having noone to share my authentic self with was isolating. I had the priviledge of being white-passing in some spaces so I learned early on to assimilate."

CMU student
Sarah Sepke

‘What matters is who you are’

International student athlete Ashley Goh’s journey from Malaysia to Mount Pleasant

By Sydney Neal
Reporter

Growing up in a small, tightly-knit family in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, Ashley Goh, an international student athlete on the women’s golf team, shared a special bond with her brother through sports, specifically softball and golf. Being nine years younger, Goh looked for things to do that followed in her brother’s footsteps.

As an adolescent, Goh took a liking to many different sports, with softball being her favorite. However, her transition to the United States meant leaving behind softball at the age of 16, as golf opened new opportunities for her.

“I actually really liked softball,” Goh said. “It was a team sport and I had friends playing the sport with me. Golf is such an individual sport, I’m always alone. ... It’s just hard sometimes but I don’t regret the decision and I am glad I am here right now.”

With golf being popular in the U.S., Goh decided to pursue her passion here. Following in the footsteps, Goh saw the success others from Malaysia received in the U.S. It was ideal for her to get her education while doing something she loved.

“I actually submitted my application to every Division I school in the U.S. for golf,” Goh said. “I had a few responses back, but when I talked to the previous (CMU) coach, he really made me feel welcomed, and I met the girls not in person but virtually. I thought it would be a good fit for me to be here.”

After realizing that CMU was her home for the next four years, Goh packed up her stuff and blindly moved to Mount Pleasant. All she knew were the people she met through a Facetime call and pictures of campus life.

Spending four years on a campus that was not diverse like her hometown, Goh was unsure of how people would adapt to her on campus but was surprised to see an immersive amount of support from coaches and teammates.

“I’ve never been bullied or looked down on, which I’m really grateful for,” Goh said. “I know some people go through racism just because you’re an Asian, which I expected it to happen coming here. I’m really grateful for my teammates and my coach...they really make me feel comfortable, instead of judging me for being who I am.”

Being of Asian descent, Goh acknowledges the positive experiences she’s had so far. Coming from a diverse town, it’s obvious to Goh that the Asian population in the country is underrepresented.

“The percentage of Asians in America is so much less,” Goh said. “We’re not as recognized here as back home, and I think this is something that should be promoted. Asian women in sports and Asians in sports, in general, should be constantly promoted, it would be cool to see more representation.”

Beyond just playing golf, Goh’s experience became a way to learn about American culture, make new friends and have a college experience, all while facing the challenges of being an international student. Sadly, after moving her life here in 2020, this opportunity was cut short due to COVID-19.

Without forming connections with peers on campus, Goh struggled with having the college experience that she initially thought she would have, making it harder to connect with people outside of sports.

“We were just asked to be in our own bubbles,” Goh said. “We weren’t allowed to socialize with other people, except for my team who lived in the dorms. I look back now and see the (current) freshman and they have so many more friends because they’re allowed to socialize.”

Balancing academics and sports, making connections in a foreign land, and facing the uphill battle of COVID-19 have

> They (my parents) attempted to teach me about my culture ... but as I grew up I became more and more detached from my heritage. Being trans-masculine and Asian has changed the way people see me. ... (while) being non-white in a predominantly white city makes me feel othered and out of place.
>
> Former CMU student
> Avery Baggett

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been significant challenges. Yet, Goh's resilience shines through. The struggles have shaped her, molding her into a stronger individual ready to face whatever comes next.

"It was a slow transition," Goh said. "Senior year has been better because now I have friends from the international student organization. I've met some really good people there. ... Because they are also international students, it's so much easier to connect with them. I think it's a really good organization to join."

Being away from family is never easy, but Goh copes by visiting home every summer and winter. Being family-oriented from a young age, she keeps her family updated, finding peace in the fact that the physical distance has not affected her family life.

Life in Mount Pleasant, though different from her hometown, has been an amazing experience for Goh. While coming from a busy and high speed town, she has come to love the peacefulness that Mount Pleasant brings.

"I like it a lot," Goh said. "I think it's so calm and peaceful because there's not a lot going on but there's enough to live your physical everyday life and still be happy. I am really enjoying it so far, and I am sad to be leaving here in a couple of months."

As Goh approaches the end of her college journey, the question of what lies ahead arises. Golf may not be at the forefront; instead, she's thinking about her career path. Majoring in interior design, she envisions herself working in a bigger city. With plans to work in Chicago, Goh is open to experiencing new opportunities. She continues the same mindset she had when deciding to spend four years of her life in Mount Pleasant.

"As of now, I don't think I'll turn professional for golf," Goh said, preparing to close out her final season. "I mean if it happens, it happens, but that's not my number one plan. I did an internship last summer in Chicago which was a completely unfamiliar place to be at. It was amazing ... I'll probably try and get a job back there."

In a world where sports meet cultures, Goh's journey goes beyond golf. It takes courage, adaptability, and breaking barriers - a story that resonates far beyond the boundaries of any golf course.

When thinking about those who will come after her, she encourages standing strong in one's identity, believing that recognition will come as a natural consequence of talent and diversity.

"Always stand on your ground and never change who you are," Goh said. "At the end of the day, what matters is who you are and not who you are trying to follow. You are trying to build a reputation for yourself, and that's important because you want to be a leader and not a follower."

Nico Mendoza | Visuals Editor

CM Life photo illustration and portrait of Ashley Goh

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Column: Have the hard conversations

By Aurora Abraham
Reporter

Hard conversations are exactly that ... hard.

However, as a journalist and, more so, an empath, I've learned that those are the conversations we grow and learn the most from.

For most of my life, I celebrated Catholic and Jewish holidays. Growing up in an interfaith household meant I got to experience two of the largest and smallest religious groups in the world.

But at the same time, it couldn't have felt anything farther from religion. I did not go to Church or Temple at all. Growing up, holidays were mostly about the presents.

This changed for me in 2022. It was the first time in my life I was not home to decorate a Christmas tree and partake in the usual traditions.

That year, I was in Israel.

It was my first experience ever being surrounded by people my age who shared the same Jewish

identity as me. It was life-changing.

And so was Oct. 7.

It seems it awoke a lot of different emotions and ideas across the globe.

Aside from the fear I felt for my family in Jerusalem, it evoked curiosity for me. I became deeply interested in the history of this conflict, how the world arrived at a place of such divisiveness, and most of all, if any of that matters to the rest of the world.

Sometimes it feels like this will never end and society will never agree.

The one thing I do know is that ignoring this war is harmful.

In September, Central Michigan University published a podcast with Director of Diversity Education Nikita Murry. In it, she answers questions about why hard conversations are necessary.

"Everybody has a perspective, and as a culture, we've never really focused on hearing another person's perspective and just allowing that to be," she said. "No judgment, no assessment, no consequence to it, just this is another person's perspective.

"And so, we get to learn from people in that way when we allow it to happen, but there's so much of our society historically ... connected to there being an unpleasant consequence of allowing that to happen, and so we shy away from it or we just flat-out reject it."

Since Oct. 7, I have been in search of community and consolation. To find it, I spent Hannukah with my grandparents in my hometown of Indian Harbor Beach, Florida.

It was an incredibly special experience. Not only did I get to light the menorah with my grandparents for the first time in over a decade, I got to experience Judaism through their lens.

With that, of course, came hard conversations.

In talking about the Israel-Hamas war, we did not agree on everything. Our differences resulted in disagreements. Like much of the world, we struggled to agree on Israel's response to the Oct. 7 attacks and possible resolutions to this war. We're not the only ones.

Last month, the *New York Times* published an article about generational divides among Jewish American families.

I'm not here to discuss the content of mine or my grandparents opinions. The point is that, like I did, people can become so deeply engrained in their opinion that we forget that's all it is – an opinion.

Like Murry said to do, I tried to relieve myself of all judgment or reaction when having conversations about the war with my grandparents. I kept reminding myself that all of their life experiences up until that very moment have led them to think the way they do, as is the same for me.

And for you.

If we want to see any change in the world when it comes to the Israel-Hamas war, it must start with non-judgmental and transparent dialogue.

I challenge you to start a conversation with someone you do not agree with. Enter spaces that challenge your opinions.

Allow yourself the time and space to understand why another person thinks the way they do.

The only way to understand others – even and especially when you do not agree – is to have those hard conversations.

Don't wait for them to find you. Seek it. Initiate it. And let's all grow together.

Aurora Rae Abraham is a senior reporter and former Central Michigan Life editor-in-chief.

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Washington/Ojibway	:44	:14	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Anspach/Pearce	:45	:15	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Ronan/Grawn	:47	:17	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Main St./Gaylord	:48	:18	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
MMC/DOAN CENTER			UPON REQUEST
Washington/Clayton	:05	:35	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Larzalere	:06	:36	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Wightman	:07	:37	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Park Library	:08	:38	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Music Bldg. - Lot#33	**:12**	**:42**	**EVERY 1/2 HOUR**

GOLD

SAC/McGuirk	:13	:43	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Stadium Mall			UPON REQUEST
TJ Maxx			UPON REQUEST
Walmart			UPON REQUEST
Copper Beech	:26	:56	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
The Reserve	:28	:58	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Jamestown	:30	:00	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Yorkshire Commons	:33	:03	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Music Bldg. - Lot#33	**:42**	**:12**	**EVERY 1/2 HOUR**

DEERFIELD

TOWERS @7/11	:15	:45	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
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Westpoint Village	:18	:48	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Deerfield Village	:20	:50	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Lexington Ridge	:25	:55	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Theunissen Stadium Lot#70	:27	:57	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
Communter Lot #75	:29	:59	EVERY 1/2 HOUR
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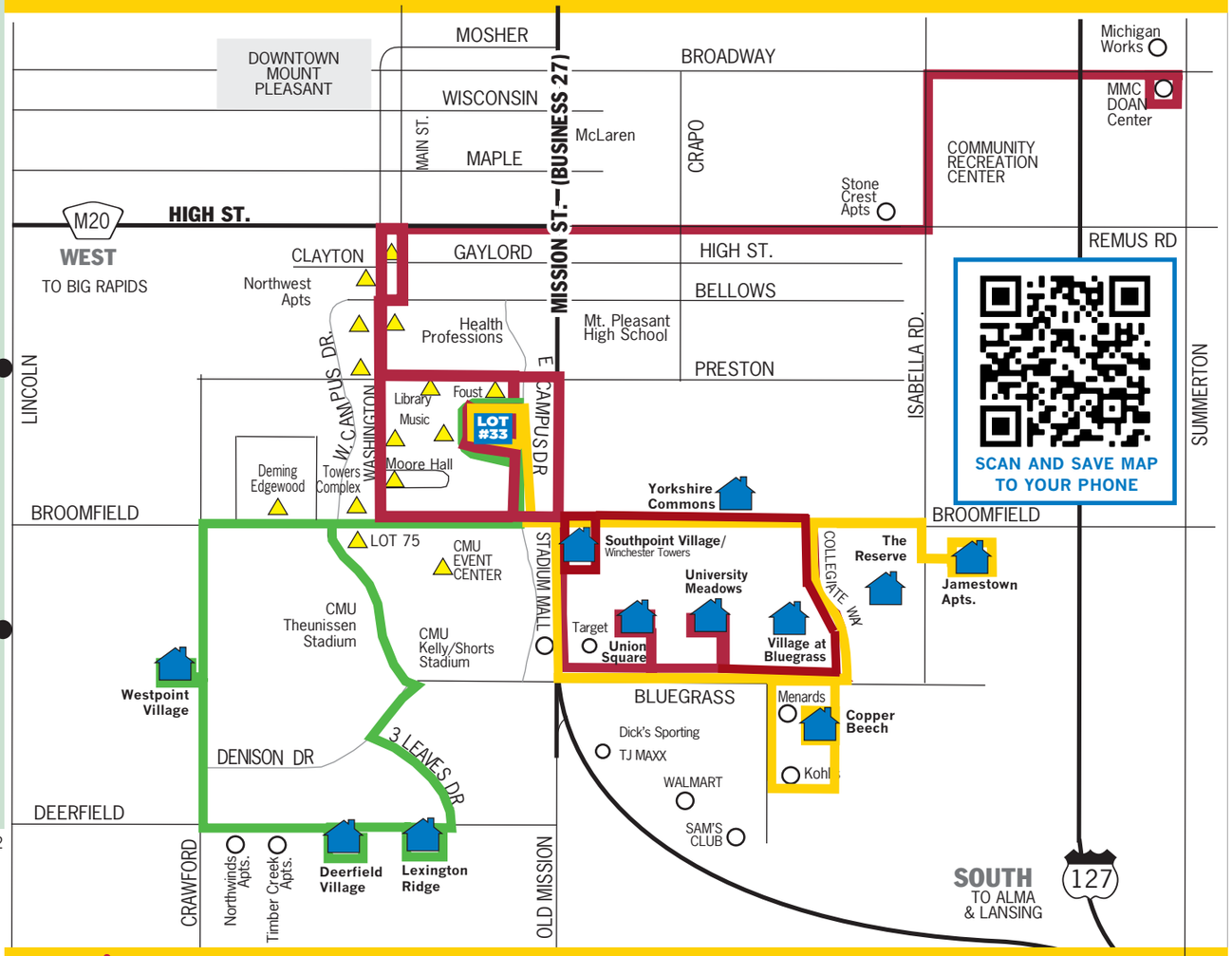

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Life through our lens

Central Michigan Life is introducing its first Multicultural Student Newsletter -- "MS News." Its first edition will be out Feb. 21 in honor of Black History Month. The online edition will feature BIPOC student and faculty voices and experiences through multimedia stories. If you are interested in being a part of the bi-monthly newsletter as a writer, photographer, videographer, translator, designer or would like to host a podcast, email us at editor@cm-life.com.

Audrey Konitsney | Staff photographer

Senior Michyah Jones presents her poster board at Black Mental Health: Let's Talk About It, Tuesday, Feb. 6 in Kulhavi 141. Jones' board was on what mental health is.

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Cupcake you are my Valentine! From your Tea

Happy Valentines Day, MJ! We all miss you so here, but are very proud of you and the trail you are blazing at CMU! Mom&Dad

To Kaitlyn Mack, Mom and Dad send kisses and our love always xoxo

Happy Valentine's day Bo ❤️
I love u, xoxo JCP

Though one year of forty may not be much to you, I'll be with you the next forty, and hopefully then some too - Ginger

To: Alessandrita From: Fridita
Hola mejor amiga bonita, feliz día
de la amistad, eres la mejor, te amo mucho!

To: Reshma From: Neha
You know how I am I always hurt but I care for you. Also, never want to hurt you anymore. Sorry!

To Michaela: To my favorite roomie, I love you my bestie XOXO, Gabby.

To my bestie Sami, I love you so much, keep on slaying. From, Carly

To Paige and Averi, I love you both more than you'll ever know - Bri

To: Devin From: Zoe
You are so amazing and I love you
SOOO much!! Also I wish I could absolutely slay as much as you everyday!

To Catie + Jada, Thank you for being the best roomies, I love you. From, Paige

To: Elliot, Trent, and Jaden From: Mason
Don't let your dreams be dreams.
Reach for the stars fellas. ❤️

To The boys of Alpha Sig: The best group of guys ever assembled at CMU. From: Dad

To: RHA E-Board From: Aliza
Love you guys! This year has been amazing and I can't wait to see what the rest brings.

Love you with all my heart -Baby

To Samayia, Jackie, Katelyn, Anna: Thanks for sticking beside me. I really appreciate you guys! Love you! From: Michelle

Happy Valentines Day bestie! I love you so much and I'm so grateful for your friendship ❤️

I love you so much! you are such an inspiration and role model to me. Te quiero mucho!❤️
I'm going to miss you!

To Logan, from your loving fiancée: I couldn't imagine my life without you. I am so blessed to have met you and can't wait to spend the rest of my life with you. Your's always, Aurora

To Kaelan: Happy Valentines honey, I am so grateful to have spent 2 years with you and am excited to spend many more together. You are truly the best, and most supportive boyfriend I could ask for. Love, Dumpling

To The CMLife Ad team: You guys are such a brilliant team, and I am so proud of how far each of you have come. I am so excited to see all the amazing things you all will accomplish. From, Rachel

To Kay, Bri and Jay — So proud of you guys! Love y'all the most! Love, Lauren.

To: Z From: Rachel
You are such an amazing editor, team- mate and friend. I am so grateful to be able to work alongside you.

Avery, after a year of us, my dear, my love grows only more sincere. Would you be my valentine and spare me a tear? -Lauren

To my CMLIFE fam, you guys brighten my week!

To Jacson, Curtis and Benny! You are the best little men EVER! Gigi loves you to the moon and back! POSSIBLE!!! ❤️

To Nick: I love you so much! You make me the happiest girl in the world ❤️ Love you, Chloe

To all my wonderful roommates Sophie and Ellie, my friends in Film Society, CMU Equestrian Team and CM Life! Much Love, Paige

To Liz Warner: You're the best and I love you so much. From: Emily Thorner

Rodney you are incredible, looking forward to seeing what the future holds. XOXO Wiggles

To all my amazing gorgeous friends,
I love you all so much and hope you have an amazing valentines day pook- ies!!- Emma Engler

To my beautiful best friend I love you so much Happy Valentine's Day I'm so thankful for you and our Friendship!

To the amazing CM LIFE team! You are incredible, it is amazing to work beside you all and witness your creativity and passion! Happy Valentine's Day! - Kathy

To Carmine: I love you so much, not only are you my partner, you're my best friend, and you've made my life so much better. Love, Siris

To: Bri From: Tim
Happy Valentine's Day! You are awesome!!

To Hailey Rochon & Lauren Hartman
From: Marissa Bloomquist
I'm so thankful for you guys and you both are amazing roommates. I'm so excited to see where your futures take you and I can't wait to make many more memories over our next for years. Love ya! ❤️

To all of my AΣT sisters, I love you so much and I hope you all have an amazing Valentine's Day! ❤️

Sky is full of stars, but moon is special. Tree is full of leaves, but flowers are special. Similarly, my life is full of girls, but you are special.

To: Marissa and Lauren
Thanks for being amazing roommates, I love you guys. Love, Hailey Rochon

I'm your number one hater, Zach ❤️

I love you a million times over again. ❤️

Thank you for being so cool. I hope there will be so many days we can hang out. I haven't met anyone like you, and each moment with you is bliss. Cheers, Your Secret Admirer

To: Samantha From: Bel
Thanks for being one of my best friends ❤️

I don't know what I would do without you!
Love you bunches ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

To Mom, thank you for all your support and care, not to mention the love. I could not be any more lucky then to have someone like you along with me every step of my life ❤️ ❤️ - From Luke

Happy V-Day I love you!

Happy Valentines Day, I love you so much. Anjalena, I love you to the moon and back. Shine bright like a diamond ❤️ ❤️ Happy Valentines to my fav girl ever!

To The Fam: Love you guys, I cant wait to get back! From: Len

Miranda! Thanks for being my ride or die, I could not imagine my college experience without you!
Love you forever -Ari

To Emily: Thanks for being my actual rock idk what I would do without you. Love, Sydnee

Feliz Dia de san Valentin amiga!

To: The CM Life Team
Thank you for another amazing year!
It is an honor to work with each of
you. I'm excited to see what trends
you set next. - Regan

Dear Liz and Hannah, I'm so happy
to have become roommates with you guys this year.
You guys truly deserve the world, love you lots! ❤️
Love you forever Zoe

Nicole, can't wait to graduate with you!

To Alexys: To my bestest of besties From Eliza

To Eliza: You're my platonic lover From: Lexy

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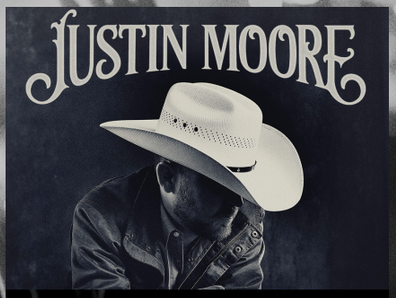
AN EVENING WITH
JEFF FOXWORTHY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16 | 8PM
$47, $57, $76, $82

VODKA PASTA

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17 | 8PM
$50



JUSTIN MOORE

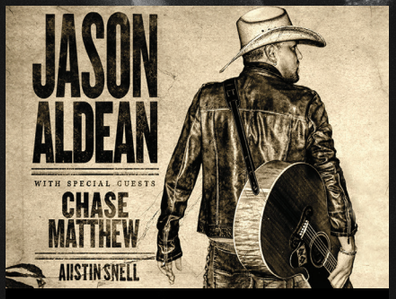
SATURDAY, MARCH 9 | 8PM
$44, $54, $72, $78

TESLA

FRIDAY, MARCH 15 | 8PM
$44, $54, $72, $78

GODSMACK
VIBEZ TOUR WSG BASTIAN DA CRUZ

SATURDAY, APRIL 27 | 8PM
$69, $80, $92, $99



JASON ALDEAN
WSG CHASE MATTHEW & AUSTIN SNELL

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16 | 8PM
$54, $144, $178, $209

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